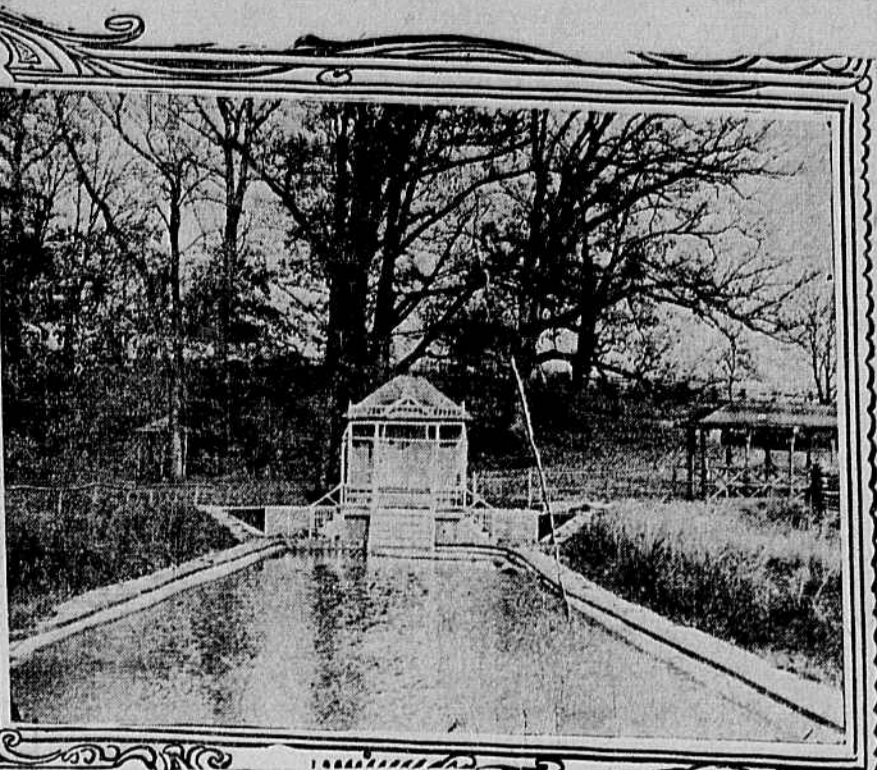


John Armstrong Chalonier, of Merry Mills



"MERRY MILLS" MANSION,
at Cobham, Va., residence of John
Armstrong Chalonier.

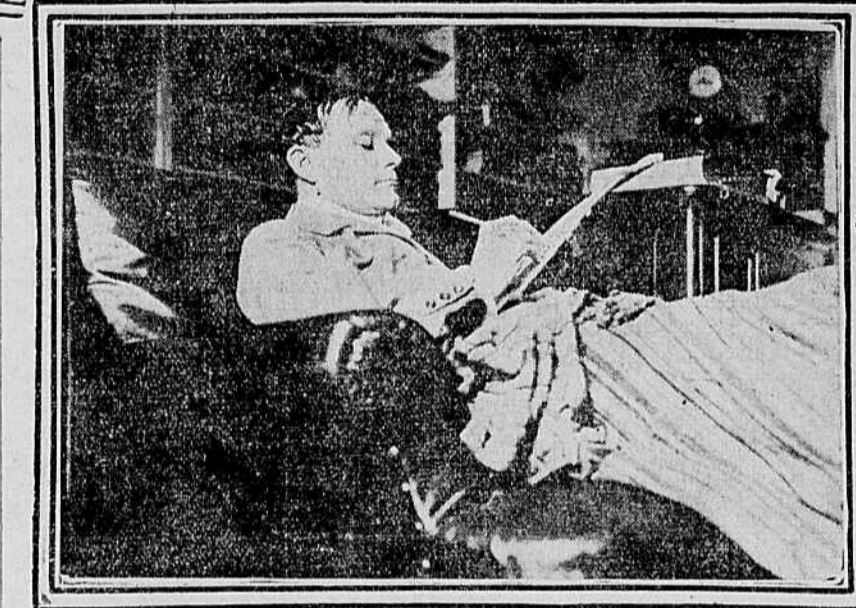
The Man Who, Single Handed,
Is Fighting for His Fortune
and Liberty Against the
Powerful Family of
Which He Was
Once the Head.

BY WALDON FAWCETT.

On Monday, November 20th, in the little city of Charlottesville, Va., the curtain will go up on another act in the strangest legal case of the century—the picturesque fight of John Armstrong Chalonier for Chalonier, as he now spells his name, to prove his sanity and win back his fortune of \$1,500,000. This handsome young millionaire—once the pet of the New York "400" and formerly the husband of the brilliant Annie Rives—has already been declared sane by the courts of Virginia, in which State he makes his home, and the courts of North Carolina, in which Commonwealth he has extensive property interests.

Thus two triumphs already stand to the credit of this descendant of Charlotte Corday, victories which assure him his home and his personal liberty, but it is the forthcoming or third legal duel, with the bulk of his fortune as the prize, the outcome of which he awaits with all the tension of a Monte Cristo, ready to cry: "The last one—three!" For, he explained, the current proceedings, although their locale is in the one-time home of Thomas Jefferson in the uplands of Virginia, have as an object the establishment of Mr. Chalonier's sanity in New York State.

It was in New York State, it may be remembered, and not in Virginia, where he had long resided, that this scion of the famous Chalonier family was declared insane. After proceedings seemingly high-handed and certainly sensational, he was thrown into Bloomingdale Insane Asylum in the spring of 1897, and there he remained until four years later, when he managed to make his escape, and returned to Virginia, where he was known and where he had no difficulty in demonstrating his



JOHN ARMSTRONG CHALONIER,
Writing in the reclining position which he is forced to assume because of
spinal trouble.



JOHN ARMSTRONG CHALONIER,
Dictating to his secretary in his library at "The Merry Mills."

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VERY LATEST PORTRAIT OF JOHN ARMSTRONG CHALONIER.

sanity to the satisfaction of the courts.

Plucky Fight.
Ever since his escape Chalonier has been fighting at long range to establish his sanity in the Empire State. For two reasons, this plucky fight for freedom has been carried on in historic Albemarle county, Va., where the present hearings are to take place before a commissioner of the United States Federal court. In the first place, Mr. Chalonier has not dared set foot in New York State, on pain of being seized as a lunatic and hurried back to the madhouse from which he escaped after so much effort. Secondly, though by right a millionaire, he is, in effect, penniless in so far as his New York estate is concerned, for with his imprisonment in Bloomingdale his entire possessions in New York, valued at \$1,500,000, were turned over to a "guardian." In whose possession they have ever since been. Thus denied

the use of his wealth, Mr. Chalonier has at all times been compelled to wage his fight with some eye to expense.

Tale of Middle Ages.
The tale to be unfolded by Chalonier's testimony reads like a chronicle of the Middle Ages. Moreover, it involves a number of names conspicuous in the world of affairs. Foremost among these famous actors in the drama was the late Stanford White, who later met a tragic death at the hands of Harry Thaw. White was an old friend of the man whose sanity is now in question, and it was the architect who, in the spring of 1897, came to Chalonier's Virginia estate on an ostensibly friendly visit, induced the young millionaire to accompany him to New York for a taste of the metropolitan whirl, and when he got him there, it is alleged, largely instrumental in having him committed to the insane asylum.

Startling as will be the disclosures of these hidden chapters in the life of Stanford White—with side lights on certain other famous men, including the late Augustus St. Gaudens, the sculptor who cooperated with White in formulating what is now denounced as a plot—they will be, if possible, exceeded in interest by the baring of the details of a bitter family feud, of which Chalonier has been the victim. The man who is now fighting to gain recognition of his sanity declares that the entire and combined Chalonier family has all along been arrayed against him, and it was because of this attitude on the part of his brothers and sisters that he forsook the family name in its present form and secured an act of legislation in the South which enabled him to revert to the spelling of his name to its ancient form of Chalonier.

Distinguished Relatives.
It is indeed a distinguished array of relatives who are to be held up to the public gaze as the enemies of this isolated member of the Chalonier clan. Most active among them will be the events that led up to the madhouse episode were Lewis Stuyvesant Chalonier, lately defeated for Governor of New York State, and Winthrop Astor Chalonier, who, as sheriff of Dutchess county, New York, has been much in the public eye of late as the jailer of Harry Thaw, slayer of that self-same Stanford White, who figured so conspicuously in the tragedy of two States. Parenthetically, it may be remarked that a half a dozen points does this mysterious Chalonier case touch that other cause celebre—the White-Thaw tragedy. But there have been other Chaloniers, who had but lesser roles in this complex drama, and among them is the fourth brother, Colonel William Astor Chalonier, formerly a Congressman, and a sister, Mrs. Richard Aldrich, who, as Mrs. Margaret Livingston Chalonier, was the foremost of the "Gilded Age" during the Spanish-American War. Even the great-grandfather of the miscreant "mad man," Mrs. William Astor, that absolute ruler of New York's exclusive society, was drawn into this family feud to some extent.

Strange Charges.
The keynote of the charges that led to Chalonier's imprisonment as a lunatic, and the charges that will be met emphatically refuted at the coming hearings, concern certain supposed features of Chalonier's life at "The Merry Mills," that being the name of his estate near Cobham, Va. The persecuted young millionaire now declares that his brothers, who swore that they had seen these odd goings-on at the "Merry Mills," never so much as saw his Virginia property, much less set foot upon it, but his denials have not dissipated the popular belief that an atmosphere of mystery enshrouds the life of Chalonier on his plantation in the Old Dominion. It was to probe those vague, intangible rumors that the writer recently visited "The Merry Mills."

To sum up the observations of this

visit at the outset, it may be said that the present-day existence of John Armstrong Chalonier at the "Merry Mills" is the typical life—seemingly, the ideal life—of a man of the tastes and the temperament, the means and the requisite leisure to enjoy country life in the most perfect environment which America affords for this form of existence. The geographic and climatic conditions could not well be improved upon. Located in the picturesque Piedmont region, little more than a score of miles from "The Knot," the hunting lodge of President Roosevelt, Chalonier's home is near enough to the large Eastern cities to insure all conveniences, and yet isolated enough to enable restful quiet and seclusion when it is desired.

A Stately Home.
"The Merry Mills" is distant about two miles from the little station of Cobham, on the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad. The big, yellow colonial house, with white trimmings, is not as impressive architecturally as many Virginia mansions, but the convenience of its interior arrangements atones for any defects in exterior appearance. This stately house, surrounded by noble trees and set down on an estate of more than 100 acres, has been the home of John Armstrong Chalonier ever since he came to the Old Dominion at the behest of Cupid.

It need scarcely be explained that Chalonier is not a native Virginian. Like the other members of his family, he is a New Yorker, and the train of events which resulted in his migration to Virginia began twenty-one years ago, when, one August night in 1887, at the Casino ball room in Newport, he met and forthwith fell head over heels in love with Miss Annie Rives, the beautiful daughter of Colonel Alfred Landolt Rives, of Virginia. Now, Chalonier's resolutions not to marry until he had reached the age of twenty-five were bowled over in an instant. He followed Miss Rives to her home at Castle Hill, near Cobham, Va., won her hand in marriage, and purchased the neighboring estate which has ever since been his home.

This estate takes its fantastic name, "The Merry Mills," from a historic old mill located on the edge of the plantation. Mr. Chalonier does not at present own this old building, but he has an option on it, and declares that he is expected, he regains possession of his fortune, and his first act will be to purchase the property. According to tradition, this mill was, in the olden days, the rendezvous for all the young people of the countryside, who gathered to dance on its expansive floor, and such was the reputation acquired that it came to be known universally as the "Merry Mill." In



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Chalonier, today, lives much in the open. His home is in a cline where the

time this was corrupted to "The Merry Mills," and when Mr. Chalonier pursued his present country seat, the name caught his fancy and he bestowed it upon his newly-acquired holding.

Fond of Country Life.
Mr. Chalonier grew very fond of Virginia country life and its magnetism remained unbroken, although his romance with the woman known to fame as an authoress did not have the traditional "happy ever after" sequel. After about eight years of wedded life he and his bride agreed upon a divorce upon the true and only ground of incompatibility of temper.

Ever since his escape from Bloomingdale Asylum Chalonier has kept bachelor's hall at the "Merry Mills," which he declares will always be his home, no matter how wealthy he may become. "The domestic arrangements at the 'Merry Mills' are largely in the hands of 'George,' a faithful colored man, who combines the functions of valet, chef and butler. Five farm hands who occupy nearby tenant houses complete the roster of the 'help' on the estate. For all that, there is nothing of the 'down at the heel' look about the 'Merry Mills.' The estate is not kept up as are many of its neighbors in this favored region. Although John Armstrong Chalonier is by no means living in poverty, as has been pictured in some instances, it must be admitted that he is in reduced circumstances as a result of the happenings of a dozen years ago. It is hard to imagine for a man who is as fond of thoroughbreds as is this Virginia country 'squire' to content himself with a couple of horses. However, if Chalonier recovers possession of his fortune of \$1,500,000 and an additional \$250,000 of accrued income, there will be a wonderful transformation at the 'Merry Mills.'

Literary Tastes.
Almost every room in the "Merry Mills" mansion betokens the literary tastes of its master. The walls of the large library, which opens to the right of the central hall, are lined with well-filled bookshelves, and the overflow of books and magazines and manuscripts extends to the billiard-room, at the rear of the house.

On the left of the hall is the dining-room, a stately apartment, with a wealth of old mahogany calculated to arouse the envy of any collector of antiques. Conspicuous among the furnishings of this room is a magnificent sideboard that was brought to Virginia when the old British barracks at Halifax were dismantled. On the second floor are the sleeping apartments and Mr. Chalonier's private office.

John Armstrong Chalonier, as we see him to-day on his Virginia estate, is a splendid figure of a man. Slender, tall and erect, with the carriage of an athlete and a voice an actor might envy, there is nothing in his manner or in his conversation—the latter showing a wide knowledge of current events and a keen interest in the world's affairs—to justify the most fleeting suspicion of irrationality. A stranger meeting him for the first time is instantly struck by his remarkable resemblance, full face, to Napoleon Bonaparte. It was this facial resemblance, by the way, that cost Chalonier four years of misery in Bloomingdale. Always a student of the occult, he on one occasion entertained a number of his friends with a scientific experiment, in which Chalonier, in effect, entering a trance, sought to have his face resemble the death mask of Napoleon. It was a "business" test, but Stanford White, who was present, thereupon constituted himself the busbody of this celebrated case and immediately took steps to put his trusting friend in the power of the New York alibists.

Chalonier, today, lives much in the open. His home is in a cline where the

The Swimming Pool and the Grounds at "The Merry Mills."

ner developed a spinal affection from which he has never since been free. This does not make itself manifest when he is standing, walking or even riding horseback, but it prevents him occupying an ordinary straight-back chair for any extended period of mental work. Consequently Chalonier either dictates to his secretary standing by the fireplace in his cheery library or else wields a snub-nosed blue pencil on a pad propped before him as he reclines on a sofa—or more likely in a cavernous leather chair, with an ordinary chair affording support for his outstretched limbs. It was in this position that the virile insurgent prepared all the briefs for his present legal battle and composed those brilliantly caustic sonnets which have caused many a smile and a scowl in recent years.

In Excellent Health.
Chalonier is to-day in the best of health. He does not smoke or drink, has the benefit of pure air and plenty of outdoor exercise, and is full of fight, as his opponents are likely to yet learn to their sorrow.

Cuttingly incisive in comment and with a wonderful vocabulary at his command, he does not mince words in denouncing his detractors. No man in America could have felt or manifested greater joy over the result of the recent gubernatorial election in New York, that snuffed out the political hopes of his brother, Fresh from a fight of twelve years' standing for his property and his good name, he is entering with vengeful vim into what he is confident will be the final battle. If he wins, Chalonier will be a public benefactor, for he will have been instrumental in securing new rights for persons charged with insanity and in raising new safeguards against the too common practice of railroad insurance companies to the madhouse. A victory for Chalonier will be as full of significance for every person charged with or suspected of insanity as was the Dred Scott decision for the slaves. It will win for every person whose sanity is questioned the right of a trial by jury, an unprecedented public investigation, devoid of the star chamber methods that have made many an insane asylum a convenient vehicle for the unscrupulous.

Like Mark Twain, John Armstrong Chalonier does most of his literary work in a reclining position. This compulsory habit is another heritage of those dreary days in the madhouse. In the spring of 1899, in Bloomingdale, from the force of environment and the shock to his nervous system from the terrible surroundings, Chalonier

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Knickerbocker Norfolk Suits, coats with or without belts of strictly pure wool fancy Cassimeres, Tweeds and Cheviots, in handsome pattern stripes, plaids and broken effects, all sizes to 17 years, and unmatchable \$5.00 value. Special only \$3.95.

\$5. Corduroy Suits, \$3.95.

Boys' Corduroy Norfolk Suits, "Double Breasted" style, in light Norfolk styles, splendidly made, of best quality corduroy, good values, in all sizes to 17 years; Special only \$3.95.

Boys' \$5. Reefers, \$3.39.

Boys' Nobby Reefers of pure wool, dark navy blue Cheviots, Peter Thompson regulation style, with navy blue buttons and chevrons, lined and pure wool flannel, positive \$5.00 value. Special for only \$3.39.

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